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USA'S MUST

*Team Yamaha Star Racing's Alex Martin
is ready to take on the world at the MX des Nations
in his 2017 Accuri goggles.*



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Photo: Dave Trumpore



TEAM





O MX

CV emboldening...

Tommy Searle's first title came courtesy of second position overall at the final round of the Maxxis British Championship last weekend at Foxhill and where the Monster Energy Kawasaki rider beat incumbent Shaun Simpson to the crown by just two points after eight close and tense rounds. Great excuse to run this fantastic shot from Glen Helen of '100' in action

Photo by Ray Archer







PIRELLI

Phew...

Big relief for World Superbike Champion Jonathan Rea in Germany last weekend. The Kawasaki rider saw his championship lead drop from 71 to 46 at Laguna Seca and then down to 26 with a second consecutive DNF on Saturday at Lausitzring. In the hardest race conditions Rea formidably bounced back to win race two in the wet and push the margin up to 47. Talk about twists and turns

Photo by Graeme Brown/GeeBee images



SBK



Catch me...

Can Dani do it again? The forces aligned for '26' to produce a masterful performance at Misano and to become the eighth different winner in MotoGP this year in the thirteen rounds on the calendar to-date. Just Aragon this weekend lies ahead before the epic October trawl to Japan, Australia and Malaysia

Photo by CormacGP



MOTOGP







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SBK

PIRELLI GERMAN ROUND LAUSITZRING · SEPTEMBER 18 · RND 10 of 13

Race one winner: Chaz Davies, Ducati

Race two winner: Jonathan Rea, Kawasaki



SBK GER



Blogs by Graeme Brown
Photos by Kawasaki/GeeBee/Ducati Corse/
Honda/Milagro

WORLDSBK HAD BEEN GROWING A RACING ITCH FOR ALMOST TWO MONTHS AND WHEN THE SERIES WENT ON HIATUS AFTER THE TRIP TO LAGUNA SECA. BACK AT THE LAUSITZRING FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2007 GERMANY PROVIDED CONTRASTING CONDITIONS AND SOME ANGUISH ON BOTH SIDES OF THE KAWASAKI RACING TEAM GARAGE AS THE TITLE CHARGE NARROWS WITH THREE ROUNDS TO GO

ROUGH & SMOOTH



SBK GER



PIRELLI GERMAN ROUND

LAUSITZRING 2016

SBK



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SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM...

By Graeme Brown

It was a terrible struggle to wrench myself away from my yacht sailing around the Tropics but the WorldSBK championship returned at the weekend, after what seemed like a spring, summer and autumn break, at Lausitzring in Germany. If only there had been one more week of holiday.

In reality getting back into it was like it always is, as if I had never been away.

It was nearly ten years since the series had last been to Lausitzring and my memory from then didn't have me frothing with excitement at a return. Sure enough I arrived on Thursday afternoon to find there was no desk space left in the press office and no wifi codes left to give out. I was told that they had laid out 75 places and generated 75 codes. The press room staff didn't think there would be over 100 people. Now I am sorry if I am trying to over simplify things but if you add the number of permanently accredited media to the number of one-event accreditations I think you will come up with a number that will tell you how many seats and wifi codes you will need. Just a suggestion, but they can keep that one for next year, see how it goes.

In terms of the championship there now seems that there aren't enough seats to go around either. Over the break there was a hectic game of musical chairs that has seen several rider changes.

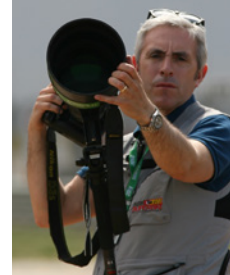
Stefan Bradl drafted into the Ten Kate Honda squad and that prompted the announcement that Michael van der Mark had finally decided to jump ship to Yamaha. I think it's a bit of a gamble on both sides. The Yamaha hasn't set the heather on fire so far, and whilst Bradl is a quality rider there is no guarantee that he will find his form on a Superbike.

It seems the talented Dutchman just really wanted a change. His results this year have shown promise but he explained in an interview to his home media that there were still issues with the electronics package on the Honda that were limiting its potential. Personally I like Michael and he has a great riding style and bit of a win-or-bust attitude that makes for good racing. I hope he finds his feet quickly at Yamaha and gets the results he is looking for.

That move has left Sylvain Guintoli looking for a new seat as has Ducati's Davide Giugliano.

The young Italian has lost his ride to Marco Melandri. A really strange choice for me. Giugliano has struggled to find form again after his big crash that resulted in a broken back last year, but he has shown in flashes this season that the speed is there. His team-mate Chaz Davies has at times been utterly dominant, so the bike is definitely fast. There was also the chance of Eugene Laverty taking his seat as well but apparently the Italian telecommunications sponsor, Aruba.it were concerned about falling interest in the WorldSBK series and demanded a big name Italian rider, hence Melandri. He may well draw in a few more Italian TV viewers but given Davies' current form he will surely be playing second fiddle in that garage.

Laverty has found himself re-united with Aprilia but at the Milwaukee squad who have severed their ties with BMW; rather harshly as well with team boss Shaun Muir posting a picture of his race bike on social media with the simple caption – For Sale. Laverty will be joined by Lorenzo Savadori from the current IODA Aprilia squad. It therefore looks as though current Milwaukee rider Josh Brookes will be heading back to the UK to race in BSB whilst team-mate Karel Abraham is looking for a ride elsewhere in the WorldSBK paddock.



I am sure he will come with enough backing to find something somewhere.

The races themselves at the weekend were fairly intriguing. Davies was on another planet in ideal conditions but was highly critical of the Lausitzring track. Most riders who rode at the test in August had complained that the track was incredibly bumpy. There are several changes of surface as well and the white lines and curbing being very unforgiving, particularly when the short circuit came on and off the oval. Most of them felt that it wasn't really up to standard for modern Superbike racing.

Jonathan Rea got a 'Get Out Of Jail Card' on Sunday when the heavens opened as the grid formed up for race two on Sunday. On Saturday he suffered a recurring problem in race one, finding neutral out on track and crashing out of the race as a result. The team rebuilt the bike overnight and changed things to make it harder to select neutral on the grid but hopefully resolve the problem on track. There was a lot of debate in the pressroom if the problem was Rea's doing as team-mate Sykes hadn't been suffering the same fate. In the end the weather intervened. This time Sykes fell and Rea dominated on the treacherous surface, meaning we left Germany with the championship standings more or less where they were when we arrived.

Next stop is Magny Cours where the weather can play a part as well. Thankfully it is historically a venue where we get a huge crowd of fans that creates a brilliant atmosphere, as well as a track that has thrown up some great races in the past.

Maybe we should have just skipped Lausitzring and headed straight to Magny Cours. At least I would have got that extra week aboard my fantasy yacht.



MONSTER ENERGY GRAND PRIX

GLEN HELEN RACEWAY • SEPTEMBER 11th • Rnd 18 of 1

MXGP winner: Eli Tomac, Kawasaki

MX2 winner: Jeffrey Herlings, KTM



By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer

MXGP CAME TO A WRAP WITH THE CHAMPIONS CROWNED BUT THERE WAS STILL RACING TO BE DONE ACROSS THE LOOSE EARTH OF THE GLEN HELEN HILLS IN CALIFORNIA. JEFFREY HERLINGS WORE A SPECIAL NO.1 PLATE FOR THE FIRST AND LAST TIME ON HIS RED BULL KTM 250SX-F WHILE THE MXGP CLASS REMAINED IN THE AMERICAN DOMAIN OF MONSTER ENERGY KAWASAKI'S ELI TOMAC. A RAY ARCHER GALLERY AND MXGP BLOG INSIDE

TWO-UP TOMAC

OF USA
8

MXGP USA



PLAY



MXGP USA







Dean Wilson's last ride on the Red Bull KTM had its moments and kept the former national champion in the shop window. Expect the Scotsman to stay stateside next year but MXGP could still beckon in the near future

Fantastic image of Tony Cairoli giving chase to Glenn Coldenhoff; the Dutchman discovering a vein of speed and confidence in the final Grands Prix of the season to give encouragement for 2017 (and also bolster the Dutch team's excellent chances at the Nations this weekend)





Romain Febvre won Glen Helen convincingly in 2015 but since his concussion only made the box twice with two third positions in the rest of '16. Yamaha were already testing for 2017 in California and a problematic clutch ruined the first moto for 461



MXGP USA





Glen Helen on Saturday and Kevin Strijbos (who would be Belgian Champion a week later at Kester) gets ready for the first major downhill brake-tester. Jeffrey Herlings couldn't resist the chance to change his race number (right) in the only opportunity to do so and the Dutchman faced new Geico recruit Jeremy Martin (top) in his first race run on the CRF250R



AN OASIS IN THE DESERT...

By Adam Wheeler

For the second year in a row MXGP came to an end at one of the most revered circuits for motocross and a mecca for the sport in southern California. For the second year in a row Glen Helen was not troubled for spectator space. It is something of a quandary that local fans do not respond to the Grand Prix of USA. On Saturday at the San Bernardino site there was a skeletal – and quite worrying lack of – attendance that thankfully fleshed out on Sunday but still not to the extent where a glance over the site would bring the word ‘busy’ to mind. Glen Helen is a well-organised and delectable event that 99% of the MXGP paddock looks forward to. The only drawback is the 9.500km difference from most of the teams’ central European base that means freight expenses and the prospect of jetlag. When it comes to the circuit, the prestige, the climate, the circumstances (‘end of term’) and the enticement of some fresh competition then Glen Helen is a highlight of the calendar. It seems that sections of the industry responds as well. The paddock was the one place that was full on Sunday and with a who’s who of guests, company owners and ambassadors as well as other riders curious for a look.

The Grand Prix suitably addressed the notion that fans are only interested in seeing native talent on display by providing representation from the Monster Energy Pro Circuit Kawasaki team and the factory squad through the conquering Eli Tomac; who’s speed was nothing short of outrageous around the Glen Helen hills. The

2015 edition also counted on decent KTM and Husqvarna American team presence. From the whooping and hollering I could hear trackside as Tomac recovered from his poor start in the second moto to chase and eventually scalp both Tim Gajser and Tony Cairoli then the spectators relished the fact that one of their own was dishing out the pace and ruling the Grand Prix scene.

Looking in another direction then the ticket prices were on a level pegging with the Lucas Oil Pro Motocross national that had taken place in late May.

In a move that was professional and gracious most U.S. based specialist press gave plentiful coverage to the fixture, meaning a lack of awareness was not a major excuse.

With four Grands Prix at Glen Helen this decade and with responses that might prompt half a smile rather than healthy back-slaps then there has to be questions over what can be done to help it prosper. Whether augmenting the entry list further will have any bearing, or slashing the ticket prices substantially to bank on more commercial possibilities or perhaps the quantity of local marketing could be looked at?

2017 could open some floodgates. If the 71st Motocross of Nations makes it to Glen Helen then the sheer international interest of the date will already cause the road to San Bernardino to congest. There can be little more in the way of incentive for patriotic Americans to see a first



class team (no travel hassle to blame in selection issues for Team USA) take on the best of thirty other countries on home turf. It will be the first 'MXoN' on U.S. soil since the 2010 edition at Thunder Valley in Denver, Colorado and also the very first in California, having previously visited Budds Creek in 2007 and Unadilla in 1987. The Grand Prix will take a hiatus from Glen Helen due to their Nations appointment but the presence of North America in MXGP should remain with the second-ever slot at the Charlotte Motor Speedway coming into play. In fact the '17 calendar is rumoured to have the North Carolina facility down as staging the penultimate Grand Prix of the season with a jump back to Europe and potentially the Grand Prix of the Netherlands at Assen and then another transatlantic hop for the Nations.

“2017 could open floodgates. The 71st MXoN should cause congestion at Glen Helen...”

It was surprisingly to hear a high-ranking figure at Glen Helen last week talking of the future of the USA Grand Prix; ruminating on the whys and wherefores that MXGP could not share billing with the last rounds of the AMA Nationals.

It is not a new suggestion and would be a complicated arrangement in terms of sponsorship and priorities but would also be a mouth-watering occurrence and with the kind of cast list and billing that would make events like the Nations, SMX and the Monster Cup salivate further. With Supercross starting to puff out its wings then any hint of a brief unification would only be a magnificent boost for motocross. Glen Helen's position as a global jewel in the sport and the only site to stage both AMA and MXGP series could only be polished further.







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SHOOTING FROM THE HIP

LEATT GETTING FULL-ON FOR '17

By Adam Wheeler,
Photos by Ray Archer



LEATT HAD US A LITTLE WORRIED WHEN WE ROLLED INTO A CALIFORNIAN SHOOTING RANGE FOR A PRESENTATION ON THEIR 2017 GEAR AND PROTECTION LINES. WE KNOW THE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE DILIGENT AND PRODUCE SOME HIGH-CLASS WARES BUT TO WITHSTAND A 12 GAUGE?! WE NEEDN'T HAVE STRESSED. THE SHOOTING WAS A WAY TO UNWIND AFTER THE COMPANY'S EXPLANATION OVER THEIR LATEST CATALOGUE EXPANSION AND SOME INTERESTING ADDITIONS TO A RIDER'S CONSIDERATIONS FOR KIT...

Leatt have an explosion of colour and innovation in front of us but it is hard not to look at the rack of shotguns to one side. The South African brand – 2016 marking ten years since they first sold their award-winning (and still best-ranked according to www.vitalmx.com) neck brace protection – have drawn most of the international press corps to the Mike Raahauge shooting range in California the day before the season-closing Monster Energy Grand Prix of the USA, and the tables and stands on show demonstrate just how much Leatt have applied their science-based approach to a glut of worthwhile products.

The GPX neck brace is well known and has evolved over five versions to the point where it is the 'Kleenex' definition/standard of the segment. Their chest protectors aren't far behind and are already highly rated for their fit and function. Armourgel sculpted gloves sit beside hydration packs and other protective items, such as the eye-catching single-hinge knee brace. The GPX helmet takes pride of place at the centre of the collection that now also features some futuristic material and fabric on their motocross gear lines.

Walking around Leatt's compact lab and office facility in Cape Town five years ago company founder Dr Chris Leatt vowed that the firm would not veer towards being a 'me too' enterprise; churning the production line through the night simply to fill the shelves with other branded objects. Leatt's offerings had to make a difference.

"Leatt was a neck brace-only brand for four years and then branched into protection mainly due to compatibility issues, riders were taking off body protection to wear the brace," explains Todd Repsher, General Manager of the Americas, chatting through the '17 range and expounding on the evolution of Leatt before moving onto the day's clay pigeon duties. "Now it seems every piece of protection out there on the market is compatible with neck protection."

"As a brand we have really worked on connecting with the riders and then enhancing their experience," he adds. "We have moved back to our core reason-for-being and there are now twelve different levels of body protection; this has come out of riders' experiences."

Leatt are excited about their helmet that now reaches a second generation model and with increased variety of design. There are off-road and bicycle versions and several important key points that cause the GPX lid to stand out from a market in which there is so much choice. Crucially Leatt – like trailblazers 6D and MIPS ["MIPS is great and can now be found in 72 brands of helmet"] – are looking at how head safety can offer much more than simply a hard shell, absorbent liner and comfy padding.

"We were able to use the expertise and experience of the lab, all the research and at least three biomedical engineers who had been working and testing with many different brands and models," says Repsher.

LEATT SHOOTING OUT





We saw first hand how Leatt were working their way through the helmet market in their bio-mechanical tests for the neck brace; it is hard to imagine another company gaining so much indirect data on one product through the fine-tuning of another. “Any impact around 70Gs is a concussive level, however just 40Gs with rotation can kill you. Brain rotational protection is on everybody’s mind.”

“We found that if we reduce the weight [of the helmet] by 10% then it was like-for-like in brain rotation and other measures. Then if we reduced the shell size then we could effectively double that reduction and this was the start of our pursuit of a smaller helmet,” he says. Shell size was shrunk thanks to 3D in-moulded foam and the 360 turbine technology (essentially Armourgel shock absorbers) was essential for that drastic drop of up to 40% of rotational acceleration to the head and brain. “Don Morgan, an Australian helmet guru, came up with intersected ‘V’ foam that is moulded straight onto the shell instead of being inserted and where air bubbles force the need for a bigger shell.” The effect of Morgan’s ‘Conehead’ technology

permitted Leatt to craft a lid that is noticeably more compact; it takes some time to digest the fact that the GPX actually claims to be a safer helmet when everything about its smaller dimensions instinctively propels you to think the opposite. It is sturdy in the hand and the aesthetic of the 2017 models are easier on the eye compared to the launch helmets.

Repsher demonstrates the shell’s robustness with a 3.3m drop test and a pointed lump of steel used in many official tests (ECE and DOT). The two helmet options feature carcasses of carbon and a carbon-fibreglass weave with 100 grams difference in weight. Repsher also says that the 191 holes around the helmet for ventilation capabilities made for “a huge technical challenge.”

Two other curiosities grabbed attention. The GPX also features hydration tube compatibility and the padding itself boasts removable foam rather than the whole section itself being withdrawn, meaning the inside of the helmet collapses much more easily for fast extraction.

LEATT SHOOTING OUT







Another highlight of the 2017 line-up was Leatt's divulgence of their fondness and link with Armourgel. Repsher amusingly demonstrating it's potency by wrapping his hand in a lump of hard 'goo' (like silly putty) and whacking it with a hammer. "Armourgel is a British company whose product defies Newton's laws by being able to absorb impact without deflection or cause," he says, digits thankfully free of harm. "Just 4mm can halt a 22 calibre pellet and we use 6mm in most of our protection. It is not affected by hot or cold but it is expensive and heavy; it has its Pros and Cons."

Armourgel is conspicuous on the nine different off-road gloves with Lite, Windblock and Flow versions with differing degrees of protection. The handwear links up nicely with Leatt's first dip into riding kit. "We've developed a great brand and we know fans have a passion for it and want to express that," Repsher comments by way of justification for Leatt entering another crowded segment. "We were being asked about it so we worked on the MX gear for two years because we wanted something different."

The difference comes through four price levels, headed by the top-of-the-range '5.5'. "The jersey is very stretchy, light and features no stitching as the seams are taped and welded," Repsher says pulling a lemony shirt. "It also has a stretchy collar to fit over protection." Windblock and Vented incarnations fulfil other requirements depending on the weather and season.

Leatt's attention to detail comes through with the riding pant and the IKS (internal Knee brace System) which features several layers all moving, sliding and combing to reduce wear. If the jersey weighed almost nothing and was prevalent with four-way stretch and venting then Leatt had their calling card on the pants with this function. "Knee braces ruin the pant, rub the plastics and reduce the contact feeling with the bike so our IKS system features a four-layer design," Repsher reveals. "The first is slippery and the next is a layer of nanogrip that has been bonded. It actually works very well when wet. We had such a good reaction with the nanogrip on the gloves that we have inserted it into pant."

"75% of the pant is made from four-way stretch fabric and the traditional motocross pant has been flipped around; there is only rigid material in certain sections," he adds before pausing and admiring the state of how fabric and fabrication has advanced. "The material market is amazing; there is so much out there. We are just at the tip of the iceberg."

With our faith embellished against some of the worst motocross and off-road riding can throw at us, the idea of spitting some hot lead into the Californian blue above doesn't seem so daunting. And – as we'd come to see – unlike some of their guests, Leatt seems firmly on target.

LEATT



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COLD STEW...

By Steve Matthes

It's an interesting time in American motocross. The depths of the economic depression were deep a few years ago but for the most part, the racing world has rebounded from that. Salaries for riders and number of rides aren't where they were in the late 90's-early 2000's but it's better than it's been for many of the riders lately. This year though there are a number of great 450 athletes that don't have anything lined up for next year.

There are two spots left at RCH Suzuki and most of us figure that Broc Tickle and Justin Bogle will get those factory RM-Z's for 2017 and there's one spot at JGR Yamaha but that still leaves riders like Justin Brayton, Dean Wilson, Jake Weimer, Weston Peick, Kyle Chisholm with nothing. That's 450SX podiums, 450SX heat race wins, 250SX/MX champions all with nothing. Shocking times indeed with way more 250 rides available as teams put greater importance on potential than actual results.

Above all these riders lurks James Stewart and to a lesser extent, his brother Malcolm. Neither rider has anything on lock down for next year but signs point towards Malcolm getting a GEICO 450 Honda factory bike for 2017 in a similar deal that the team found for Bogle last season and Eli Tomac the year before.

But what about his brother James? The third winningest rider of all-time and a rider that at times showed us some incredible feats on a dirt bike? Of course we all know his story, suspended for a year by the FIM for not getting an exemption for his Adderall use and then last year suffering through a winless (almost finishless!) 2016.

Stewart was heavier, he was slower and really was a shell of his former self that we saw in 2014 when he won five 450SX races. It's unbelievable to me the 'fall' he had this year. We've always seen James be a front runner in any race he's ever been in but in 2016, it was a struggle to just reach the flag.

That's in the past- what's the future? Well, I really have no idea. Seriously. I've been getting heat on social media by MX fans for "holding out" on what JS7 is going to do. As if they cannot believe that Stewart doesn't have a ride for next year and I know what he's doing but not sharing. To that I say: "I wish I did..." I think there's a real possibility that we've seen the last of James Stewart out on the track.

"I think the only way we see the #7 on the track is if he invests in himself like his buddy Reed did..."

His Yoshimura Suzuki team folded up and is just going to offer technical support to yellow teams and I know there was a push by the Stewart brothers to get some factory bikes from Honda under the GEICO banner and run their own team for 2017. James himself had some talks with Mike Larocco of GEICO about wanting to get back to the top but that deal isn't happening. Partly because of Honda unable to supply factory parts because of the new 2017 CRF450R and it being all-new and the factory in Japan having suffered damage from an earthquake there a while back. And partly because I think it didn't make financial sense for the GEICO guys.



If you're James Stewart you have to get factory bikes/support for yourself right? Well, KTM, Husky won't have anything to do with him, he's not going back to Kawasaki or Yamaha (apparently there was an 'ask' by Suzuki to JGR that in return for bikes, they take JS7 that was rebuffed) and that leaves Honda. But as we said, that doesn't seem feasible for Honda or GEICO.

There are those RCH spots and perhaps Suzuki makes RCH take Stewart for 2017 but with Ricky Carmichael not being a fan of James going back to their racing days, I can't see that happening. Besides, it was well known that Stewart was not a fan of his RM-Z so not sure this matches up.

I think the only way we see the #7 on the track is if he invests in himself like his buddy Chad Reed did for the 2010 season. Reed was a lot like Stew back then in that he was undesirable for the factory teams. He wasn't happy at Kawasaki and had burnt bridges at Yamaha and Suzuki liked him but had no money and Ryan Dungey. Reed took a Honda, started his team and got back into the good graces of just about everyone.

Even if Stewart takes that route and starts everything up, I think deep down he has to ask himself if he really wants to race? It was obvious he wasn't prepared in 2016, his mind knew what to do but his body couldn't and he ended up on the ground more times than not.

IF he wants to race he's going to have to work harder than ever to get back into the shape he needs to be to be a front-runner. The skills are still there - that kind of talent isn't ever going to leave you - but he's older now and needs to work.

And honestly, I don't know if he's willing to do that. He's got his legacy, his titles, the highlights—maybe that's how he should leave it. Then again the sport is better with Stewart out on the track. It really is. You'd have to be there to explain it I guess. But if he's going to mail-it-in like 2016, then I'd rather he not ruin this movie for me any more.



FEATURE

NEW GROUND

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer, Veltins Arena/Youthstream



SMX: THE LOW-DOWN

ANY SPECTATOR OR FOLLOWER OF MXGP THIS YEAR CANNOT HAVE IGNORED THE HYPE AND PR AROUND THE VERY FIRST SUPERMOTOCROSS RIDERS' CUP HAPPENING AT THE VELTINS ARENA ON OCTOBER 8TH. THE MEETING TAKES THE MOTOCROSS OF NATIONS SELECTION PATTERN AND SWAPS COUNTRIES FOR MANUFACTURERS AND BOASTS A TASTY LINE-UP WITH THE LIKES OF RYAN DUNGEY, JUSTIN BARCIA, TIM GAJSER, MARVIN MUSQUIN, JEFFREY HERLINGS, JASON ANDERSON, ROMAIN FEBVRE AND MORE SLATED TO APPEAR. WHAT IS SMX? HOW WILL IT BE? WHAT WILL IT MEAN FOR THE CROWDED INTERNATIONAL MOTOCROSS CALENDAR? ALL QUESTIONS WE STROVE TO FIND ANSWERS FOR. [READ ON...](#)



At a time when the busy motocross landscape is starting to morph and show wobbles of significant shift a new entity has arrived on the skyline. The Super-motocross Riders' Cup is a lengthy moniker for perhaps the boldest attempt yet to bring some of the biggest hitters in the sport of motocross together in one start gate, and seems to draw sporting parallels to UEFA Champions League and FIFA World Cup; it will be an annual event where athletes perform for their teams, brands and contract as opposed to hoisting national pride as their main priority...as they would at the Motocross of Nations, which takes place the weekend before 'SMX'.

Beyond the entry list – which is the most eye-catching element of this inauguration so far – the important element of the SMX is that fact that motocross is going indoors and to the modernity of the Veltins Arena (home of Schalke 04 FC, football fans). Bringing MX into a stadium allows the sport to tap into all the conveniences that have helped supercross become the second largest motorcycle racing series in the world.

“Our will is to mix the historic element of motocross with the new: the venues. We always want to keep tracks like Maggiora and Matterley Basin but we also want to draw families and people who might not have come to motocross before,” says Youthstream Director David Luongo a former professional footballer who has joined father Guiseppe in guiding the efforts of the MXGP promoting company. “The Veltins Arena is one of the most beautiful stadiums in Europe and it is very easy to work with the people and the management there. I met them with my football background and it was obvious to me that if we'd go into a stadium [with the sport] then it would be this one.”

“The flooring can be removed and it is less expensive than many other stadiums where this would be an issue,” he adds. “The idea was to try and bring the sport to the centre of a city but we did not want to build a supercross track, which is more technical and U.S. orientated. We wanted a track that would fit ‘both sides of the Atlantic’ and would be city based...and at the end of the season [in order] to make a ‘party’ together with the manufacturers. Of course it would not be feasible if the manufacturers were not with us on this project. So we asked and the feedback was very positive and we went in this direction.”

SMX will run for the first time in October and its genesis comes from the co-operation of the brands through provision of the factory teams and requests to their riders. Also sponsors such as Monster Energy, who have helped ensure the likes of Justin Barcia will be in Germany competing. It also benefits from a generous prize scheme that will see the individual winner from the three races on Saturday night pocket 50,000 euros (10k to the top MX2 runner) and an equal quantity provided to the victorious manufacturer. Through the angle of teams ‘united by colour’ and the spectacle on show, SMX aims to deliver something different. The roots of the fixture though initially began on the MXGP calendar and the desire for Veltins to host a Grand Prix.

“Yes, the idea at the beginning was to put it inside the [FIM World] championship to add something different, in a great place and where you could draw and fit 50,000 people,” Luongo says. “It was not possible because of the technical requirement when it comes to the length of the track. The project was so good that we did not want to stop it and found another idea off the back of the Motocross of Nations, which



is the diamond of the motocross world and is the event that everybody wants to see. The small problem is that the Nations has four-five good teams but you end up missing the presence of some riders. Team USA and France, for example, are very strong but then you have other American and French riders that are very good. So the idea was to take the same principle of the Nations but to bring the quality even higher. To take the best rider per colour and create a unique event based on that."

Timing was important. Particularly with the slender off-season in the USA, American contracts tending to start from October 1st, the Monster Energy Cup in mid-October and the

Red Bull Straight Rhythm also on the general MX agenda. Not forgetting the obligations that Veltins also has. "We wanted to do it right after the Nations and the brands can use the timescale to make media opportunities and promotion because some [riders] will already be at the Nations and can stay one week-ten days more," explains Luongo. "If we do it too later then they are already in preparation for the next season. It was important to compact it with the Motocross of Nations and also be aware of the football and the stadium was free in October. The next slot for international matches is in November and that would be too late."



A date, a place, an idea, support and a cast in place: arguably the biggest mystery around SMX will be the build and reaction to a track that enforces the fact that fans are watching motocross on the stadium floor; not supercross, nor Arenacross.

"We want a motocross track and people say it is impossible but to me it isn't," Luongo asserts. "You have to imagine stripping back the stadium and just building a motocross track of 800m. It will mean less jumps than a track of 1600m [FIM regs state a 1650m length for MXGP] but you can have the same type of jumps, waves and speed as a motocross track and this is our target; to have good speed and to make obstacles that can fit both supercross and motocross riders. People won't have to work too much on the technical setting of the bikes. It will be a hybrid track...but as close as possible to motocross."

"It is a big stadium, probably one of the biggest in Europe so that helps," says Track Builder Justin Barclay who turned his skills to the

recent creations at the Charlotte Motor Speedway and some MXGP alterations to Glen Helen. "Logistically you have to go fast-slow, fast-slow and that's really the only way to make it like a motocross track and move it away from being a supercross track. We just want the guys to have fun and feel safe indoors; that's the main aim and objective. And that it's good for racing."

"We are also using sand to try and split it a bit," Barclay continues. "We don't want whoops and there are a few timing sections similar to what you might find at Glen Helen. It might look like supercross but it is actually rolling stuff and things we can take from tracks like Franciacorta [2009 Motocross of Nations site] and Sun City [South Africa] that were jumpy motocross tracks. We'll piece them together to make what is a hybrid track really. The first year of the Monster Energy Cup was the ideal concept and then it went more towards supercross; that first year is more along the lines of what we want to create."

With MXGP now at eighteen rounds and rumours of an official pre-season 'test' also being circulated in the summer, Youthstream already have their hands full with Grand Prix and associated European and Junior Championships (not to mention Snowcross). SMX is not only a big and speculative undertaking but also one that breaches new territory.

"Completely new!" says Luongo. "For us it is a huge investment; this is clear. When you enter a phase in the world of sport where you have reached a certain level then you always want more. When you are an athlete you want to go faster, when you have the right bike then you still want it better and we have to find ideas to bring our sport even higher than we have it at the moment. With this kind of annual event at the end of the year and just behind the Motocross of Nations I think we can create more attraction from the regular [motorsport] fan to our sport. So it is a new project and we took some risks but we saw that feedback from the manufacturers, industry and sponsors was so good that we wanted to go for it. It is also good to have a new challenge. We will look at the balance of things on Sunday after the event."

Perusing the SMX official webpage (<http://smxschalke.motocross-tickets.com/en/-2201.html>) reveals that the ticket prices befit the status of a premium event and costs range from 100-50 euros for seats on Saturday night. Perhaps it is a risk but then gaining the commitment of some of the sport's top stars means that the numbers can be justified. Luongo: "The ticket rate is cheaper than the Nations but a bit more expensive than MXGP. When you want to see the Champions League [finals] then you need to pay three-four more times than this rate. F1 much more also. This line-up in Europe is something I don't think we have had for twenty-five years. The Champion of MXGP, the Champion of Supercross, the MX2 Champion and the '15 MXGP Champion; it is like an all-star race. It is something really

unique in a stadium and in Europe. I'm not sure if [Ryan] Dungey has ever raced in a stadium in Europe? For this kind of event we can set this kind of price. It is something you can only see once a year."

The mystery over SMX means it is hard to gauge the reaction and potential for success, even if all the ingredients for a top-drawer spectacle appear to be in place (you cannot help but wonder how many more pre-event sales would have been made with Ken Roczen on the bill in Germany). There is a balancing act and compromise with any sporting occurrence that involves outlay and conjecture. You have to wonder if SMX is a hopeful punt towards a different kind of motocross flagship for Youthstream or whether the resources and drive to cement its relevance over time are set. "It is something we want to build because we believe in the concept: to have the three best riders from a particular colour for one race," Luongo states. "Then we have the question mark of the country because this is the first time we will organise something like this in Germany so we will have to see the reaction from the German fans and the people that travel to the race. It might be that this idea could work better in another place. We believe in the concept so the target is to build the race over many years and then over a process it becomes an event that someone will really want to be at."

It is worth asking the impact a successful SMX could have on the Motocross of Nations. It's not unfeasible to think that riders could soon place more importance on their employment obligations rather than those of their country's call, and thus the allure of a seventy year old annual tournament starts to ebb. Ryan Dungey will not be at Maggiora but at KTM's behest will travel to Europe for SMX.

The Supercross Champion's case is a little exceptional considering the injury that counted him out of the majority of the motocross campaign and meaning that SMX will be his first race for three months. Arguably there is more at stake by looking rusty in Team USA colours. Youthstream insist both fixtures can easily co-exist.

"The Nations is unique because you put your nationality and your country in front. Your heart," says Luongo. "SMX is more of an all-star end-of-season party. A grand finale. I think every fan – you and me included – would love to see the top twenty American riders against the top twenty from MXGP together. It is kind of a dream we'd like to realise and that my Dad was doing during the MX Masters in the 1990s. We cannot do that anymore because the world championship is very important to all and the supercross season is very long and really great and the motocross season also. But to make one event where this could happen is our wish. However it will never 'take away' from the Nations. I think we are talking two different kinds of races."

Lastly there is no escaping the experimentalism of SMX. A capacity crowd and a strong thumbs-up from all parties involved could have far-reaching consequences. Youthstream have already met with Feld [promoters of Monster Energy AMA Supercross] and some sort of alliance would be the strongest way for Supercross to land in Europe in the coming years. When it comes to MXGP then the reception of motocross within stadium walls could give Youthstream, local promoters and arena owners confidence to add another strand of diversity to Grand Prix.

All speculation of course but, as Luongo mentioned, SMX is an initial forage into greener and unrotivated climes for motocross.

SMX is disassociated with supercross in terms of the manner of the beast but what of Youthstream's view for SX breaking out of North American borders? "I have to say that our relationship with Feld is very good," offers Luongo. "Our target is to bring this sport higher and from our point of view Supercross is a great sport and to limit it to the U.S. is a pity. We feel that in the last five-six years the two series [MXGP and AMA SX] have become very different and the riders are either preparing themselves for MXGP or those with dreams of Supercross then focus on that. There is a choice when it comes to a career. I think they co-exist well and the more popular they both are then the better for the sport generally. I think it will be a good thing."



MUD-MOVER: JUSTIN BARCLAY ON MAKING SMX LOOK THE PART



You mentioned the Monster Energy Cup in Las Vegas and their initial MX-SX hybrid goal back in 2011. Did you have a good look at that first course made in the Sam Boyd Stadium?

Yes-and-no because I think it was another race where nobody really knew what it would be like and I think it was the closest to how motocross will be inside a stadium. After that I believe it was taken towards supercross, which is maybe what people in America wanted to see. We'll want to build something where Max Nagl could still be competitive with Justin Barcia; that kind of thing. A more level playing field. If you make it supercrossy then the guys with those types of skills will take it a bit more.

So will this be quite a personal challenge for you?

Yeah, when you get a brief to fit Glen Helen into a stadium then you think 'yeah, that's simple!' I like challenges to try and create something a bit different. It might fall one way or the other in terms of what it is deemed... but we just want a good show and something different for people in Europe to see all the top riders together.

I guess you also have to factor-in a lot of other aspects such as FMX space, media space...

Oh, working in Europe means that the health and safety regulations push you to work with a clipboard every day. All those spaces are thought out. We need space for all working personnel to get around. There has to be good camera space and medical evacuation and track maintenance possibilities and it all comes into account. Luckily because of the arena space is not too much of a problem.

A lot of people will be judging and looking and comparing to Arenacross and Supercross. This is a real first experiment...

Yes...like Charlotte was as well [Grand Prix of Americas on September 3rd, round seventeen of eighteen in MXGP] and the American guys seem to like it and the European guys thought it was something cool and different. I think it worked. SMX will be similar. It is something new and I believe it can work. With the names attached to the event why would it not?



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HOLLYWOOD, BELGIUM: SPINNING THE WORLD WITH JEREMY **VAN** **HOREBEEK**

MONSTER ENERGY YAMAHA'S VAN HOREBEEK HAS HAD A SOLID MXGP CAMPAIGN TO SIXTH IN THE FIM WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS AND A COMEBACK TO THE UPPER ECHELONS OF THE PREMIER CLASS AFTER A SHAKY 2015. ERIC JOHNSON PINNED DOWN THE 26 YEAR OLD BELGIAN WHILE TRAVERSING THE AMERICAS FOR THE CLOSING TWO ROUNDS OF THE '16 SERIES

By Eric Johnson, Photos by Ray Archer

Since the Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme officially christened the Motocross World Championship in 1957, Belgium has put forth fifteen world champions who have managed to win 56 world titles. 26 year-old Jeremy Van Horebeek of Eigenbrakel, Belgium (a Walloon municipality of 39,785 inhabitants) in the Belgian province of Walloon Brabant wants to be the next. A hulking 185-pound rider who careens around the great motocross tracks of the world as a member of the Monster Energy Yamaha Factory MXGP team, Van Horebeek is something of a throw-back to the era of Belgian greats such as Roger DeCoster, Andre Malherbe and Jaak van Velthoven. And he's fast. Fast enough to finish as vice-champion in the 2014 MXGP World Championship and fifth overall in 2015.

A former MXGP and MX2 Grand Prix winner, Van Horebeek was also a member of the victorious Belgian Motocross of Nations of team that defeated the world at Teutschenthal, Germany in 2013. Although Van Horebeek placed a "disappointing sixth" in the 2016 MXGP World Championship, there were a number of bright spots including podium finishes at Valkenswaard, and as you're about to read about, Charlotte Motor Speedway. An amiable, easy going character, the decade-long Grand Prix veteran is also the consummate professional who puts everything into the sport he genuinely loves. At the Monster Energy MXGP of the United States at Glen Helen, Van Horebeek, after a quick ad hoc meeting with team owner – and motocross legend – Michele Rinaldi – pulled up a chair and talked about all things motocross.

Jeremy, up to the 2016 MXGP World Championship season finale here at Glen Helen, you've finished fourth or fifth in seventeen motos this year. Talk about rock-steady consistency, huh?

Yeah, fourth or fifth all the time. It's not too bad. We struggled a little bit this year with the starts. In the beginning of the season I always had to come from the back and it was not easy to finish top three. Top five was always pretty easy, but top three was not easy. We worked all season long to get the starts better. The last few races have gone much better as we found something on the bike that really suits me. Finally, I was back on the podium last weekend at Charlotte too, so it's been good. Top five is good, but not what we want. We'll keep building for next year already.

So you guys have already starting testing stuff for the 2017 World Championship season?

Yes. Normally, we test parts in the off-season. But now, for the last few weeks, we've been testing in the races. This is a good thing because for next year we already have a lot of work done. In racing mode we know how the bike handles. That's really good and we don't have to a lot of testing after the season. That's kind of a little change we made with Michelle Rinaldi.

As you mentioned, you found yourself up on the box at Charlotte. What did you make of that track you raced on?

The track was really fast and flat, so it was kind of full speed. That was the only thing I didn't like too much about it. As far as the rest of the track, it really suited my style and my riding. Everything went good and we finished on the podium and we had a good time.

And maybe you guys were able to use some gears in the transmission you don't normally utilize?

For sure. We used a lot more third and fourth gear than normal. Normally, we are more second and third gear."

Fastest track you raced on all year?

Yeah. Definitely.

JVH ON 2016





What did you make of the wildcard Americans Justin Barcia and Eli Tomac at Charlotte?

They were much different from one another. Barcia was in front of me all first moto and he could not pull away and he uses a lot more energy than I do because he is so aggressive. I was not really impressed about that because I could stay there with him easily. But Eli, he was on another planet I think. And I don't understand it because it's really strange because when they come over to Europe they struggle a lot. The track at Charlotte was not really an American track – it was more in-between – and still he pulled it together and he was fast. I spoke to Chad [Reed] about Ken Roczen and he told me Ken is even faster. I said to myself, "Hey, we cannot ride a dirt bike!" It's really impressive how Eli rode. He beat us by 24 seconds in the first moto and we were also pushing hard. I guess it's just a different style over here. The Americans are used to the one-day events and we are not so much used to it.

Would you say the racing style is different here? Maybe the American riders attack the track as well as the early phase of the races they compete in?

Yeah, yeah, something like that. They attack not only early, but all moto, you know? In Europe sometimes, we attack from the beginning, then it kind of settles. Sometimes we don't attack in the first ten minutes and then we go. It's different. I think because of supercross they are used to it and used to riding really aggressive and attacking. In every corner they just go for it and we are, like, smooth.

How would you describe your riding and racing style?

I always push hard, but always in control. I don't make so many mistakes and I try to stay in control. I think that's a thing we European guys have, especially me. I like to be in control and I don't like it when the bike goes sideways. I think Americans just don't care about that. Like, I was behind Justin and it doesn't matter to him if he has to pull the clutch in five times in a corner, he just went for it. I went for it, too, but just in a smooth way. That's the difference.

Now if I have it right, you recently re-signed with Yamaha, correct?

Yes. One year more. So it's going to be four years already now. I feel really good here. It's like a family and I just enjoying being with this crew. They're very professional and they know what they're doing and that's nice.

How are you and your teammate Romain Febvre with one another? I know as racers you can probably only get along so well...

Actually, we don't speak so much. We had an incident in Germany this year. We touched each other in a race and there has been a little bit of tension. All said and done, we don't speak so much. Even before, we just do our own thing and focus on our own thing. I have no problem with him.

Maybe for the younger American fans who may read this, how is it being a professional MXGP racer? What I mean by that, what's it like to go travel around the world and race in all these different places and conditions and to pack your bags and unpack your bags? Do you like it? Is it more like a job?

You know you have to sacrifice a lot for this. When I was a young kid and I saw all the good riders, I'd say, "I want to be like them." I'm finally in that position and I just love every single thing about it – the traveling, the packing, the riding, every minute of training. Some people, they don't understand that you have to be really complete with all of it. For me, if I would say something to the kids, I'd say you just have to deal with all of this. If you don't, you will never get to where you want to be. Sometimes it's not nice if you have to travel a lot, but then if you think about the nice weekends you're going to have and all the places you're going to see in the world, you just enjoy it.

When you go to all the different nations and to visit all the different people, places and things that come with them, do you find time to be able to look around and take it all in?

Sometimes it's possible. Like here in America it's possible because we are here for two weeks. In Qatar or Thailand we have some

time and that's nice to be able to do some things. If we go to the European event where we are only there from Thursday to Sunday, it's really difficult. But if I have the time, I really like it.

What do you think about this California place?

Oh, it's nice. I call it living the dream. It's a real different lifestyle than we are used to. The weather is always nice. You have all the beaches and all the restaurants. It's really different. I enjoy it, but I think it would be difficult for me to live here. Now it's been like almost two weeks that we've been here, for me, it's time to go back home.

It's cool to have you guys here from the World Championship because I like the rivalry between the Grand Prix guys and the American guys. I think it's great for motocross fans all over the world. Maybe that comes from the fact that some of the first races I attended as a kid were the USGPs. What do you think of the America versus Europe rivalry?

Yeah, it's really good because. I also spoke to Chad Reed about it. Like the Herlings versus Cooper Webb thing! Yeah, it's good for our sport. We are doing it your way and they are doing it our way. It's different. That's why it's really difficult for them to come over to Europe and they struggle and that's why it's a little difficult for us to come over here.

What did you make of Ryan Villopoto being over there last year and racing in the MXGP World Championship?

I don't know... Ryan is one of the fastest guys on the planet. I think he was just over it. I think he was not really willing to go to Europe and do it the full way. Maybe he says that he was, but I don't think in his mind he was ready to do that. I do think if he would have been ready to do that, it think it would be a different story because he was so fast that it was almost not possible that he could not finish on the podium all the time. It was maybe a good experience for him. All of what he has reached in his life, I think many people can only dream of it.

Do you make a good living as a Grand Prix rider?

Yeah, I think so. If you're smart and well surrounded by some good people, you can have a really good living. But I think it's much less than over here because here with supercross, I think they earn so much money. As far as the money I make, we have Yamaha and we have the helmets and we have Monster, so we have many things. But I know it's a lot less than what many guys have here in the U.S. We can choose to come over to race in the U.S. We can. Many did. [Ken] Roczen did. We can do it, but you have to be able to do it. You have to be talented to do this. But I think as a top three or top five rider in Europe, you can do well and when you finish your career and if you've been smart with the money, you can live and any you don't have to do so much anymore.

As your results clearly illustrate, you're a very experienced and very consistent racer. That's a very important role in a factory team of this size and magnitude, isn't it?

Sometimes people don't realize if you are consistent all the time, like you are in the top five all the time, it's really good. Sometimes people don't see that.

I'd assume you are also heavily involved in developing the motorcycle. Correct?

Oh yeah. We try. I always try to find something new with Michelle. If I don't feel good with something, we sit together and try to improve. Now, here in California, we have a special seat. We change the airbox and the seat for the start. It's a prototype. I spoke about this with Michele and they just keeping working on this job. We always keep going.

Growing up in Belgium which is a nation with such a fantastic motocross history, who did you look up to? Were there certain riders you really admired?

Oh yeah. Stefan Everts. I always looked up to Stefan. And I knew of James Stewart. I knew that all over the world they were speaking about him. I think he is the fastest guy on the



plant, but he's just not smart sometimes. I was looking up to those guys like Stefan and James and Ricky Carmichael.

Jeremy, I notice you have a few pretty serious tattoos – especially the one on your left arm. Any story behind them? Those aren't so common in MXGP, huh?

Yeah, this tattoo is like the story of life. Not many guys have them in the GPs. One of my good friends is a really good tattoo guy and we started with something small and ended up with something big. I see like art. I love art, like paintings and all that. It's kind of hobby. It's just my life.





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LOWES & SEARLE

BROTHERS OF A BOILING POT

By Adam Wheeler,
Photos by Ray Archer/
Monster Energy

Around Derby there is a group of friends that train, push and piss-rip into each other. It is a gaggle with a difference. A posse that involves world champions, Grand Prix winners, prizefighters and renowned names of the motorcycle racing world. Overseen by established trainer and Circuit competitor Kirk Gibbons, two of the prominent figures are Tommy Searle and Moto2 title contender and former world supersport number one Sam Lowe. These guys have bonded through work and the rigours and demands of racing...which they largely seem to blow away through a relentless level of banter and 'grounding' of each other. Lowe has also rediscovered his love for the dirt...even if it gives the likes of Searle and company another excuse to increase the micky-taking. We decided to delve a bit deeper and see how top class athletes bounce off each other...

Tommy Searle is having a good giggle. I've just told him what soon-to-be 26 year old Sam Lowes, MotoGP-bound twin of WorldSBK racer Alex, said about his friends' tendency to call him 'The Russian' on account of a close and fairly basic hair style. 'He's got a funny haircut so he does look like a Russian!' Searle grins. 'It is the worst haircut in the world but he doesn't really care.'

'I get rinsed for my style, my gear, everything...' says irrepressible and lightning talker Lowes but you get the impression that the Isle of Man resident can also dish it back.

'Both him and Al are funny and always making jokes,' Searle explains. 'When I first met them I thought 'bloody hell, they are just full-on...'. And that was all the time. You'd be at the gym at 7am and they were already too much! They were going on about birds and this-and-that and you were like "it's 7am lads...chill out a bit!'

You wouldn't go as far to call it a 'bromance' but there is a curious dynamic between the Monster Energy Dixon Racing Team Kawasaki rider and Lowes who is pounding his way through an attention-catching Moto2 campaign. It comes from an amalgamation of remarkable motorcycle racing talent that gathered under the tutelage of Kirk Gibbons, Searle's trainer for the better part of a decade.

'Al and Sam used to live with [GP, WorldSBK and current BSB racer and son of racing legend Ron] Leon Haslam – in a caravan at his house – and used to come to the gym really early,' says Searle who relocated to the midlands around the time of his Grand Prix emergence as a sixteen year old and in the middle of the last decade. 'They were also working as electricians with their Dad. I didn't know much about them before that. They were obviously young and still coming up but we met through the training.'

'Leon is a good friend of ours and was racing for Airwaves Ducati when Ron came up to us in the paddock and said: "I'd like to help you out..." which was mint because I was only fifteen,' Lowes explains. 'We were only kids so we'd spend a lot of time at his house, train in the morning with Kirk and then go to work. As we got older we needed to get more 'on it' and ended up moving to Derby where you had people like a Boxer called Jack Perry, Tommy and Elliott Banks Browne and then Mel Pocock. It was mainly us, Leon and Tommy and it was f**king nice because we're all different characters and Woffy [Tai Woffinden] is there now and he was like a little fat ball when he first turned up. He's like me: quite loud in the group. We all have different sports but we still go at it together and there is camaraderie.'



LOWES & SEARLE

The riders met and made friendships in the damp confines of a gym and along vaguely similar training programmes. The disciplines of road racing and motocross might differentiate vastly but the squashing together of competitiveness, brashness and determination made for an intense chemistry. Talk about pressure... although the rivalry is not as hot as you might think. 'With Kirk it can be very intense, especially when you have all those boys in there,' Searle says. 'There wasn't really any rivalry though. We'd want to beat each other in the gym but obviously what Sam is doing is totally different to me. We all want each other to do well so there is no rivalry in that sense. There is fun competition in wanting to beat each other's time on the circuit and you'll come back from being away at the races and find a new mark to beat. Sam does Moto2 and I do motocross so there is not much comparison.'

'Generally it is a bit of everything, some days we'll be running, cycling or doing circuits,' explains Lowes who recently moved to the Isle of Man and logistically is constantly on the move. 'Never really any weights but if we do then Tommy does a bit more. We have this thing called the 'motocross circuit'. It is not a session because it only takes half an hour but it is a mixture of a lot of things. A mile on an old, s**t exercise bike that is stuck in gear, then a stripped down step machine that leaves your legs like jelly. Then on the rower for a mile, a grapple machine, ab exercises and others - I think 8 with weights - and then finishing on the bench which leaves you f**ked. I'm quite good at it because I have short arms! So one rep is a bit less for me compared to Tommy! You do that more or less every week and on the clock and I was 'the man' this winter and I was happy with the best time; the winter before I was nowhere near. Seeing the boxers training twice a day is another side of it that's good to know and keeps you down there and working hard.'

'Tommy tries hard not to be 'sound' but he is. He thinks he's good...and he is. But he gives respect...and a lot of shit as well but he knows how hard we all work. Motocross is a bit different because you cannot always turbo yourself in the morning because you might be riding in the afternoon whereas I'll 'leave it all' in the gym.'

Searle's influence means that Lowes has re-discovered some of his fondness for dirt bikes and – typically for a road racer – that's where it all began. 'I used to race motocross but never to such a high level because I was focusing on road racing,' he recalls. 'From twelve to eighteen nineteen I wasn't riding at all but before then I won a couple of little championships. One at 'Norfolk-Suffolk' and Elliott was second! So he's been reminded of that a few times. Dirt biking is such good training. Doing forty minutes on a motocross bike means getting on the Moto2 bike you're alright.'

'My Dad was quite strict about motocross because of injuries but we'd always try and sneak off. Haslam was a good motocrosser back in the day and wanted to get back into it and so did Alex and I, and KTM helped me out with a bike so I thought 'I'm going for it' and now I'm really into it. I love it and went to California with Tommy in the winter.'

'He came to California and we kinda found out that everything he likes and buys is terrible and everything he doesn't like is actually quite trendy,' says Searle unable to resist a smirk. 'He didn't want to wait a day for his boots to arrive so we stopped on the way to Pala and he must have chucked 2000 on new gear! He was chuffed to nuts but then makes it look awful; he is just funny. He spent four weeks riding and almost had a massive crash through over-jumping in the first couple of days but it was probably a good thing because it calmed him down a bit.'

'I left the U.S. thinking 'I shouldn't ride a motocross bike ever again' but it was fun. Up those hills at Glen Helen, flat-out. I really enjoy motocross but it's just that lack of safety net. We all chipped in and got Ed Warren's track changed last year because the big doubles were a bit sketchy but now it's a bit kinder.'

'Of course it is harder to ride a motocross bike than a road race bike but that said road racing is not easy. It is tough. What I like about motocross is that it's so different. You don't have to take the same line every lap. I can really have fun and it is good focus. I feel more freedom and jumping...which is cool compared to road racing.'

Lowes estimates he was ten-twelve seconds a lap slower than Searle around Glen Helen, which is not too shabby for an athlete that cannot afford to compromise on a high profile day job. Sam's un-chartable enthusiasm and the skilled company he keeps means that his attempts at motocross does open him up to further mockery.

'They are such piss-takers...I'll have a go at stuff and they are forever taking videos and commentating over them! I can do the jumps but I need style. I'm at the stage now where I need to 'up' the style.'

'He knows that on a motocross bike he doesn't look good,' remarks Searle, another grin coming into place. 'He'll have a picture that Al or someone has taken and he'll send it through to us saying 'should I put this on Instagram?' and we will be like 'No way! Do not put that picture up!' and he'll reply 'I know, it's s**t aint it!' and then ask why! He has all the best gear but makes it look bad. A bit like me on a road race bike!'



LOWES & SEARLE



LOWES: "THE WORST THING YOU CAN DO AS A HALF-DECENT MOTOCROSSER IS GO TO AMERICA BECAUSE THEY ARE ALL FKING FAST AND THEY HAVE STYLE! SOME DUDE IS TEN SECONDS A LAP SLOWER THAN YOU BUT ON INSTAGRAM HE LOOKS AS THOUGH HE'S HALF A LAP FASTER!"**



LOWES & SEARLE



A change of disciplines one day at Donington Park at least allowed Lowes to soak up some revenge. 'The best thing that happened ever was that Tommy went on the [road racing] race school,' '22' says. 'He's a good looking lad and he likes to look good – which is fair enough – but he had this s**t set of leathers and a s**t plain helmet and Alex and Leon were taking him around Donington. He was quite good actually and listened a lot but really wanted to get his knee down. I told him Melbourne Loop was his best bet as it was slow. He came around with his knee down but the bike was totally upright! It was an amazing photo! It helped me a lot because of all these pictures of me motocrossing and now I had something to give back. It was needed! In truth it actually wasn't bad for someone and their first time.'

Pushing Searle for some seriousness and an assessment on Lowes the jokes momentarily stop. 'I wouldn't say Sam is as good as those boys like Johnny Rea and Bradley Smith but he did not race it for as long as them. He rides quite nicely. We changed the track quite a lot for him and Al at home because the jumps were quite big and it was too dangerous. They are still a nice size but if you come up short then the landings are not so hard. Al gets a bit scarier on the bike! Sam takes his time!'

Lowes is quick to give credit and he evidently holds Searle abilities in awe. 'Tommy will jump over you, drop his hand off the bars and just look at you. There is some stuff that he does that I cannot believe. His speed is unbelievable. I'd like to go to more races with him. I think he is awesome on a motocross bike and a great person. I believe he can win races and a championship...but this game is also about the bike, team and the people around you. You need that.'

Does he envy the motocrosser lifestyle? 'You have to ride and race so much – which I think is good for Tommy this year. I think road racing opens up a bit later [in life]. Tommy was racing and earning as a sixteen year old kid. I don't

envy his lifestyle but he has a good one and he deserves it. Who has ever given Herlings a run like he did? I don't envy motocrossers because they have it tough. Do I wish I could look like them on a bike? Yes!'

Perhaps what Searle and Lowes don't need (or perhaps do) is the constant reminder of their failings. The jokes and japey seem unwittingly designed to keep everyone with their feet on the ground but it is also a consistent method of communication between close friends sometimes separated by continents. 'We have a group chat between us called 'Barry's Lad' because Freddie Sheene is in it and every time we used to go out people would say that to him so now that's who he is!' Searle explains. 'So there is a lot of jokes but when we're racing then there are a lot of positive messages. Sam has a lot of self belief and Al is the same but if there is a struggle but they both help each other a lot and they are two very upbeat people.'

'I don't think anyone has ever put an un-sarcastic comment on the group chat,' Lowes says. 'Freddie was always 'Barry's lad' at any bike event he turned up to with us so it just stuck. You get good comments but then you'll have a 'well done Sam...but what happened to your English?' just because you tend to sound a bit more European when you're talking with all the international press. I remember Tommy copping some s**t recently because the gate dropped and he went out slow to cut to the inside...we were all saying to him that it was still his best start of the year!'

Lowes, a British and World Supersport Champion, is a fantastic and rapid talker and in a separate interview he admits he is living his dream at the forefront of MotoGP. His Moto2 season has it the heights of a spectacular win at Jerez and the troughs of crashes in Germany and Austria but he is destined for MotoGP on the factory Aprilia and it is hard to find a more vibrant person in the paddock. Searle is in a slightly different place in his career but

‘We’ve had some chats but Tommy is a proud person and he wouldn’t like to have those talks in front of people,’ reckons Lowes. ‘We had a nice chat when he came to Assen last year. He’s seen me train and knows a lot about me and we respect each other enough to have those conversations. I’m always positive – so much so that they take the piss – but we’ve all got our flaws and we’re in this same type of

'I think you can take a lot from your friends... and they can always take a lot from me,' Lowes offers. 'When we are back we go out for food all the time – none of us can cook obviously – well, Tommy cooked for me a few weeks ago and he didn't even give me a bill for it...although we had to go to the pub for dessert.'

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10

MotoGP

GP TIM DI SAN MARINO E DI MISANO WORLD CIRCUIT MARCO SIMONCELLI

MotoGP winner: Dani Pedrosa, Honda

Moto2 winner: Lorenzo Baldassarri, Kalex

Moto3 winner: Brad Binder, KTM



ELLA RIVIERA DI RIMINI

I • SEPTEMBER 11th • Rnd 13 of 18

MotoGP MIS

MISANO MAGIC FROM DANI PEDROSA GAVE VALENTINO ROSSI
CAUSE FOR TEETH-GNASHING AT AN EVENT HE WOULD DEARLY
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8







Pedrosa dispatches Lorenzo on the way to his second win at Misano - his first since 2010 - and a sixth podium appearance. Dani has 'previous' at the Italian circuit with two trophies in '13 & '14



An important race for Blues Brother Rossi at Misano and the '46' could not repeat his 2014 win, despite a strong attempt. The Yamaha rider has now finished in front of Marc Marquez in the last four GPs but his inability to triumph (last 25 points was in Catalunya) has meant marginal gains in the standings





WINGLESS WONDER...

By Gavin Emmett

Slipping stealthily underneath the radar of fans and pundits alike, Dani Pedrosa made it a remarkable eight-different-winners-in-eight-consecutive-races in MotoGP when he took a surprise victory at the San Marino GP in Misano last time out. As the race got under way, Pedrosa was down on the third row of the grid in eighth, and featured in very few experts' tips for the win.

He made an excellent start, a once failsafe part of his ammunition, and after ending the first lap in sixth, gradually picked off the riders expected to run out victorious one by one. Viñales on lap five, Dovizioso on lap seven. His team-mate Marquez came next on lap 14, before he squeezed through on the factory Yamaha duo of Lorenzo, then Rossi to claim a first win since the drama of Sepang last year.

In doing so he kept up his run of having won in every single season he has competed in MotoGP - that's 29 victories since his premier class debut in 2006. In fact, before Misano he was in his most barren spell since the last time he went a campaign without winning a race - in his debut as a 15-year-old rookie in 2001.

The diminutive Spaniard boasts some impressive stats, and is without a doubt the nearly-man of the motorcycling elite. His two worst finishes in the championship in all those years have been his rookie terms of 2001 (8th in 125cc) and 2006 (5th in MotoGP). A triple world champion (125cc in 2003, and 250cc in 2004/5), he has been runner-up in the MotoGP championship three times, and only outside the top-four once (that debut season), which is exactly the reason why he has continued to win himself a Repsol Honda contract year-on-year.

The Sabadell-born rider has often been bizarrely pilloried by some fans because of his stature. Whereas a 5'2" frame perhaps offered some advantage in the lower classes, the brutal physicality required to pilot a MotoGP bike has more often than not been found wanting for Pedrosa at crucial moments, so perhaps he should be lauded for overcoming the challenge.

“The physicality required to pilot a MotoGP bike has often been found wanting for Pedrosa...”

He has never been a demon braker, and so struggles in head-to-head battles, which is why to see him block-pass his way through the order in Misano was so impressive. Whilst he may have some advantages in terms of mass under acceleration, in recent seasons this has meant he struggled to generate heat in the rear tyre.

The rule-changes at the start of this season were expected to work in Pedrosa's favour, so much so that I remember one of his camp urging me to put money on his title chances for 2016. However, Pedrosa and Michelin have a chequered past. In 2008 he made a shock switch mid-season to Bridgestone tyres, ironically after their performance at the San Marino GP and this season he had limped to just two podium finishes.

That is perhaps more of a reflection of the Honda's capabilities this year than the tyres however, but in choosing a soft front in Misano, Pedrosa found the



key to unlocking his potential. There has been a lot of crossover in tyre performance for Michelin this season, whereas with the Bridgestones we would see most riders opt for a similar compound.

In recent races the front tyre choice in particular has been crucial. Where Iannone and Viñales had stuck their neck out to win previously, Pedrosa was the only rider apart from Pirro to go with the soft front in Italy. Most intriguingly, he made this choice coupled with the decision to not run with the winglets, something he also chose to avoid in the last two races.

My Spanish colleague Manuel Pecino, esteemed journalist for Solo Moto, puts this down to the physicality required with wings attached. And seeing the multi-winged Ducati riders like Iannone struggle with arm-pump recently, and Dovizioso taping his hands up like a pro boxer, there is clearly a ring of truth around that.

My question is with the wings banished in 2017, is Pedrosa able to keep progressing through the remainder of 2016 to get his Honda in shape to be a title contender again next year? He has already decided to switch his crew chief for next season, from Ramon Aurín to Giacomo Guidotti, currently Scott Redding's main man. Having tested the 2017 Honda for the first time following that Misano success, it could well be that the pocket-sized Catalan is playing the long game.

Third place for Lorenzo delivered a second rostrum appearance from the last seven events; surely one of the driest spells in recent times for the reigning world champion







Cal Crutchlow had posted more points than any other rider in the series coming to Misano but just couldn't stretch to a third consecutive podium finish for the first time in his career in what was Grand Prix No.100. With a good attendance rate in 2017 '35' could become the British rider with the most GP starts in the seven-decade history of the sport



THE UN-HATEFUL EIGHT...

By David Emmett

And Dani makes it eight. Dani Pedrosa's win at Misano – imperious, dominant – made it eight different winners in eight races, a record. Jorge Lorenzo was the last rider to win two in a row, at Le Mans and then Mugello. Since then, we have seen Valentino Rossi triumph in Barcelona, Jack Miller at Assen, Marc Márquez at the Sachsenring, Andrea Iannone bag Ducati's first win since 2010 in Austria, Cal Crutchlow take victory in Brno, Maverick Viñales grasp Suzuki's first race since 2007 at Silverstone, and finally, Pedrosa find the top step again at Misano last week. It has been a remarkable run, capping a truly remarkable season so far.

Just having eight different winners in the same season is unusual. The last time that happened was in 2000, when a topsy turvy year saw Garry McCoy, Kenny Roberts Jr, Norick Abe, Alex Crivillé, Loris Capirossi, Alex Barros, Max Biaggi, and a 21-year-old Valentino Rossi take victories. That season was fairly remarkable too, and had some of the same characteristics we have this year: it was an bizarrely wet year, with races run in both mixed conditions and some restarted due to the weather. Rain rules meant at the time that GPs were stopped and restarted and shortened races threw up some curious results. There was a change to tyres with Garry McCoy the first rider to use the 16.5-inch Michelins, forcing others to experiment with them, alternating between the then standard 17-inch rubber and the smaller but grippier 16.5-inch tyres. There was a changing of the guard, with Mick Doohan having been forced into retirement a year earlier, and Valentino Rossi in his first year in the class, before he went on to dominate. There were factory teams, and teams with strong factory backing such as Red Bull WCM Yamaha, Pons Honda, D'Antin Yamaha. A level playing field made for unpredictable results. In 2016, some of the same factors are at work, with a few extra thrown in for good measure. So how did we end up with eight winners in eight races? Let's take a look.

Tyre variation

This has probably been the biggest factor. Michelin's first year back in the class has gone exactly as you might have expected: they have prepared well but have been forced to throw out a large part of that preparation once unforeseen circumstances intervened. They sorted out a lack of front-end grip over the winter; the front giving better feedback and putting paid to the front-end crashes that plagued earlier tests. They tried another improved front at Qatar before Scott Redding's rear delaminating in Argentina forced a switch to a very different construction. That tyre altered the behaviour of the bike entirely, and from that point on Michelin have been bringing the rear tyre back towards something resembling the tyre they had before the start of the season. It has been a long process, requiring experiments with compounds and minor construction changes. As the season has progressed, the alterations have been smaller, Michelin getting close to a baseline.

Something similar has gone on with their rain tyres. Wets are much harder to test, as the weather tends not to do our bidding, and testing on water-soaked tracks is not the same as riding in actual rain. At Assen, the tyres were too hard with a lot of riders crashing on the front. At Brno, the soft was no match for the drying conditions, the soft wet losing chunks of tread for some riders. At Silverstone, Michelin appear to have found the Goldilocks zone, by virtue of bringing three different wet compounds. Here too, Michelin is pretty close to a baseline.

The changes have seen some riders suffer, others benefit. At Brno, Cal Crutchlow chose the right rain tyre, gambling it would not rain again. In Germany, Marc Márquez decided to pit early for slicks, which turned out to be the right decision. In the cold of Le Mans and the heat of Mugello, Jorge Lorenzo could find the edge grip he needs to go fast, something he lacked at Barcelona, and at Silverstone.



Valentino Rossi used his tyre advantage to keep Márquez behind him at Barcelona. Dani Pedrosa finally got to grips with the Michelins at Misano, and used the softer front tyre to his advantage there. As the tyre design and compound choices stabilise, there will be fewer variables to have to contend with. Factory teams will be able to refine their set ups more accurately. With random factors removed, the best riders, on the best bikes, with the best teams will have the best chance of winning.

“Just having eight different winners in the same season is unusual...”

A more level playing field

The demise of the Open Class that came with the switch to spec electronics, has seen far more competitive bikes on the grid. The oldest - the Ducati Desmosedici GP14.2 - has been top five a couple of times, with Eugene Laverty scoring the bike's best result with a fourth place in Argentina. The Ducati GP15 has been on the podium once, while the factory Yamaha, Honda, Suzuki and Ducati have all won races. A satellite Honda has won twice, in the hands of Miller and Crutchlow. Even the Aprilia, coming out of the smallest race department with the least support, has regularly cracked the top ten. There are no weak bikes on the grid any more, and it shows.

Spec electronics

The unified software, as it is formally known, has had a surprising effect. Or perhaps not such a surprising effect. Factories such as Yamaha and Honda regard it as a step backward, the spec Magneti Marelli system not as sophisticated as the proprietary systems they used to run. Factories

like Ducati and especially Suzuki see the software as a step forward, and a chance to catch up to Honda and Yamaha, now that they don't have to devote such a large part of their resources at trying to write software to match that of the big two. That has brought the factories closer, neutralizing the advantage which some had. The downside has been that satellite teams have suffered, as the manufacturers focus on their own factory teams. Paradoxically, the spec software has both closed the gap, and opened it. Racing between the factory teams is closer. Satellite teams have suffered more, not having the resources to spend as much time refining the software.

The best group of riders ever?

The most interesting factor, however, lies with the riders. This is arguably the strongest field Grand Prix racing has ever seen. Twelve world champions, at one level or another. Four riders with records which put them in the top eight of all-time winners, and a fifth rider who many believe could be on his way to joining them. Everyone on the grid is more professional than those in the past: fitter, faster, more concentrated, more precise. The differences in talent and in preparation are smaller than they have ever been.

Plus ça change

There may have been eight winners in eight races, but you wouldn't get that from the top of the championship table. The top four names are the same they have been for the past four years. Other riders may be on their way up, and the field getting more competitive, but the cream continues to rise to the top. As the tyre design stabilises, and the teams get more data with the spec electronics, and bike design is adapted for the Michelins, so the results will return to 'normal'. There won't be as many winners next year. But given just how good the racing is at the moment, does that even matter?

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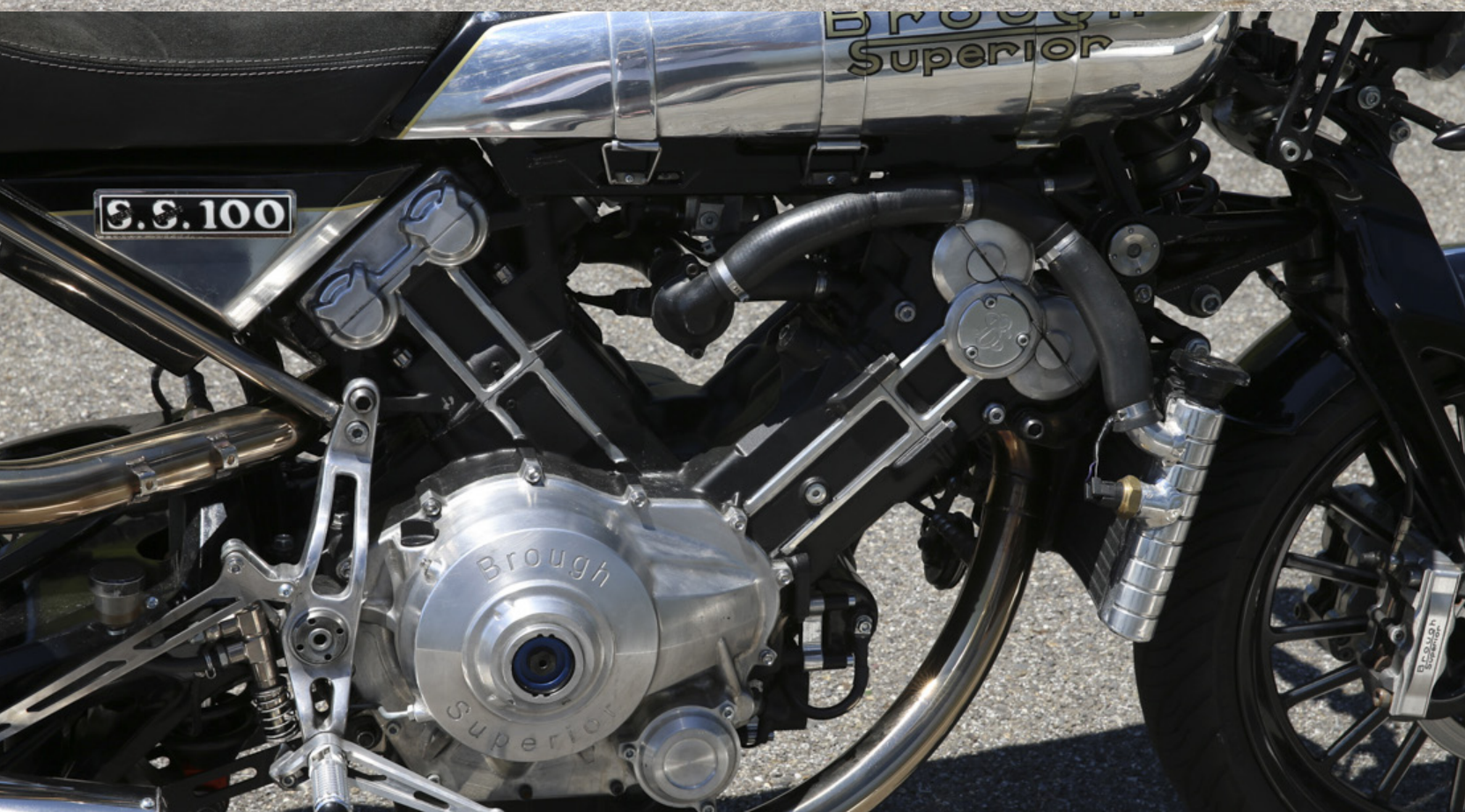
STILL SUPERIOR?

By Roland Brown,
Photos by Phil Masters



BROUGH SUPERIOR SS100





BROUGH SUPERIOR SS100

The original Brough Superior SS100 was the fastest and finest motorcycle of its day: a stylish, hand-built, 100mph-plus V-twin that ruled the roads in the 1920s and '30s, and was a superbike decades before the term was invented. But Brough Superior production ended with the start of World War II. It's almost 80 years since George Brough, the Nottingham marque's charismatic and hard-riding founder, built his last bike. Now Brough Superior is reborn, with a stunning, all new SS100 that has an unmistakable resemblance to its legendary pre-War namesake.

With its hand-formed aluminium petrol tank, 997cc V-twin engine and a host of innovative details including motorcycling's first four-disc front brake – whose small diameter gives the look of an old-style drum – the new-generation SS100 is as innovative as it is stylish.

This SS100 is a collaboration between Brough marque owner Mark Upham, an Englishman based in Austria, and French designer Thierry Henriette. It will be produced at Henriette's Boxer Design factory in Toulouse. Like the original, the new SS100 is hand built and very expensive (costing 50,000 euros plus tax, or £49,999 in the UK).

That's a big price, but this Brough is seriously special. It captures the essence of the old SS100 brilliantly, starting with the large, distinctively shaped petrol tank that was the original model's defining feature – to the extent that Lawrence of Arabia, George Brough's most famous customer, retained his tank and fitted it in turn to the string of Superiors that he owned, before being fatally injured when crashing his SS100 in 1935.



The new bike's tank is cut, shaped and welded by hand in Brough's Toulouse base. It sits above a liquid-cooled V-twin engine whose cylinders are angled at 88 degrees. Little frame is visible. A slim, tubular titanium rod runs up from a curved, polished section on each side, to support the single seat. Both this and the front subframe, also made from titanium, are lightweight structures bolted to the load-bearing engine unit.

Front suspension is by a wishbone fork of the type pioneered by the late Claude Fior, another noted French motorcycle engineer. This gives the Brough a period, girder style look that is enhanced by the wheels – finely spoked forged aluminium items of 18-inch diameter. And by the unique front brake, which gets its drum-style small diameter by comprising four 230mm discs, operated by four-piston Beringer calipers.





BROUGH SUPERIOR SS100

***"...FOR A BIKE WITH SUCH AN
INNOVATIVE CHASSIS, THE BROUGH
FELT REASSURINGLY NORMAL..."***



The round headlamp echoes traditional lenses in its size and shape, but holds LEDs and has the Brough Superior name etched into its aluminium surround. It sits below a black flyscreen and ahead of a modern, period style Smiths speedometer. Pressing the pre-production test bike's starter button brought the motor to life with a tuneful but not excessively loud V-twin sound from the twin pipes on the right side.

Although the silencers were not the street-legal standard parts, that was one key question answered: the SS100 has genuine V-twin character. The engine was developed in conjunction with Akira, the specialists from nearby Bayonne who also build Kawasaki's factory World Superbike engines. It has an eight-valve, dohc top end, and produces a modest 100bhp for the Euro 3 compliant V-twin, rising to 130bhp for the slightly louder demo bike with its accessory silencers.



That's far from an all-conquering output like that of the original SS100 in its day. But this Brough is designed for all-round use. It felt flexible and rider-friendly, pulling sweetly from low down without a hint of snatchiness in fueling or transmission. It was enjoyably quick, punching through the midrange, and kicking slightly harder towards the top end, heading for a top speed of about 140mph.

The Brough stayed stable at speed, its suspension sufficiently well damped to keep excellent control. At 186kg dry it's light, which helped. The Beringer front brake gave ferocious stopping power even in response to light pressure on the handlebar lever. That was fine at higher speeds but for general use the stopper was too fierce (especially as this year's batch of Euro 3 homologated bikes don't have ABS) so it will be toned down for production models.

For a bike with such an innovative chassis, the Brough felt reassuringly normal, tipping into turns with a very neutral feel, and holding a line accurately despite needing only a light touch to change direction. Michelin Pilot rubber provided plenty of grip, and the SS100's slimness meant that ground clearance wasn't an issue.

The SS100's hand-built construction – roughly one bike will be produced per day, starting in October – allows buyers many options. The main one is a choice of three basic finishes: the demo bike's traditional polished alloy with black top; a “full black” whose colour extends to engine and silencers; and a Titanium with polished top. Wheels come in a choice of four spoke designs; seat options range from suede to ribbed leather.

Inevitably some of the options add to that already high base price. Of course, there are plenty of bikes that provide far more performance for a fraction of the cost. But the “Rolls-Royce of motorcycles” was always expensive. In George Brough's words, it was “a big solo machine, built up to an ideal not down to a price”. The same is true of this spectacularly reborn SS100 – and riding it does not disappoint.

BROUGH SUPERIOR SS100





BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls
By JP Acevedo







'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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